



STATE HOUSE RECORDS  
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Senate Bill 223- Testimony of Mark Fix

I am Mark Fix and I am the chair of Northern Plains Resource Council.

Northern Plains Resource Council organizes Montana citizens to protect water quality, family farms and ranches, and the unique quality of life we all enjoy in Montana.

**The members of Northern Plains Resource Council oppose this bill.**

SB 223 circumvents laws that's Montana's farm and ranch families have abided by for generations.

I arrived in Helena just before this hearing. I would have been here earlier, but you see, I can't ask my boss for a day off. My boss is my ~~cows~~, my fields, and the real owner of the operation, my wife Debbie.  
CATTLE

My job is my ranch and irrigated farm on the Tongue River 20 ~~1/2~~ miles south of Miles City. At my place, we don't get days off.

Montana's farm and ranch families have a lot to worry about. We worry about cattle prices, the cost of feed, and as anyone knows who has ever put their hand in the ground, we worry about water.

We worry about water that falls from the sky, water that comes from a river, and the main source of life for my cows, water that comes from my wells. For the last several years, this water and our rights to it have been under attack.

My dad spent most of his time worrying about rain, but now, me, <sup>Debbie</sup> and my kids worry about the size of out-of-state energy companies wallets. Unfortunately for Montanans, these wallets are not full enough.

Energy companies are creeping into the Powder River Basin to extract methane from coal seams. They dangle money from these wallets in the faces of our families, friends, and neighbors. They say that CBM is a direct line to wealth and prosperity. I don't know about you, but my wealth is not a red line in a book, but the land that I hay, the cattle I feed, and the quality of water I irrigate with that keeps my place successful and ready to be shared with my sons.

This water belongs to the State of Montana. The State must protect and conserve this water for future generations.

The industry wants to ship this water out of state and waste it by spraying it on rangeland in Wyoming. By removing the requirement of a beneficial use permit, Sen. Peterson gives industry a blank check to take our water and do what they want with it. I don't want to be

the rancher that helped signed that check, and I don't think anyone on this committee wants their name attached either.

The major problem that is overlooked is how can the aquifers be replenished when the development is done? As more studies are done we are finding that these are confined aquifers and the water is ancient water. What will be done to recharge these aquifers?

I am not sure I want to be around to find this out.

We strongly urge the committee to reject this bill.

Thank you.

MARK FLX

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